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ABSTRACT

Due to a lack of initial orientation training for school-age child care staff, the childcare program for 6- to 18-year-olds, located at an Air Force installation, was not fully acquainting new employees with the developmental needs of school-age children. Because of a lack of financial resources to conduct extensive training, high turnover of staff, and low wages and benefits, the center was continually having to place untrained workers directly with children with little or no formal training. A strategy was designed and implemented that intended to provide staff and interested parents with the resources needed to ensure a quality school-age child care program. Issues presented introduced the developmental needs of school-age children, the ethical code of conduct for early childhood workers, quality care standards, appropriate environments, and a variety of supplies and equipment to provide a medley of activities for a self-directed program. The strategy also addressed the needs of parents, and made recommendations for future training opportunities. The responses of both parents and staff to the strategy were favorable. The strategy ultimately promoted the development of a new orientation training program for school-age child care staff and those parents wishing to attend. The training will be continued as a means of teaching new employees specific principles of early childhood education prior to working directly with children. It will be the beginning of a training program which will introduce school-age child care learning modules to staff involved in working with military youth. The strategy ultimately increased the confidences of staff working with youth. Appendices include sample surveys used to determine training needs and handouts used in the presentation of the orientation training. (Author/AA)

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Ensuring Quality by Achieving Center-Based Change Through the Development and Implementation of an Orientation Program for School-Age Care Staff and Parents

by

Patricia Payne

Cohort 63

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Abstract

Ensuring quality by achieving center-based change through the development and implementation of an orientation program for school-age care staff and parents. Payne, Patricia L., 1995. Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Master's Program in Life Span Care and Administration. Descriptors: Staff Development, School-Age Child Care, Orientation/Staff Training, Early Childhood Education/Training Methods, Parent Education, Job Training.

Due to a lack of initial orientation training for school-age child care staff, the program was not fully acquainting new employees with the developmental needs of school-age children. Because of a lack of financial resources to conduct extensive training, high turnover of staff, and low wages and benefits, the center was continually having to place untrained workers directly with children with little or no formal training.

The author designed and implemented a strategy intended to provide staff and interested parents with the resources needed to ensure a quality school-age child care program. Issues presented introduced the developmental needs of school-age children, the ethical code of conduct for early childhood workers, quality care standards, appropriate environments, and a variety of supplies and equipment to provide a medley of activities for a self-directed program. The strategy also addressed the needs of parents, and made recommendations for future training opportunities.

The responses of both parents and staff to the strategy were favorable. The strategy ultimately promoted the development of a new orientation training program for school-age child care staff and those parents wishing to attend. The training will be continued as a means of teaching new employees specific principles of early childhood education prior to working directly with children. It will be the beginning of a training program which will introduce school-age child care learning modules to staff involved in working with military youth. The strategy ultimately increased the confidences of staff working with youth. Appendices include sample surveys used to determine training needs and handouts used in the presentation of the orientation training.

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

February 6, 1995
Date

Patricia L. Payne
Signature of Student

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Chapter I

Introduction and Background

The Setting in Which the Problem Occurs

The setting in which this project was developed is a military youth activities' center. This agency is one section of the youth programs flight; a branch of Services Squadron located on an Air Force installation. Services Squadron provides base services to active duty military and civilian employees who work on the base. A few of the services and activities provided include base clubs, athletics and fitness, bowling, golf, outdoor recreation, skill's development, library services, child development and youth activities' programs. As the chief of the youth programs flight, the author is responsible for administering all programs and services for children and youth.

The flight provides programs for children between six weeks and eighteen years of age. Child Development Services has three child development center's that are accredited through the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. One center serves infants and toddlers, one serves full-day preschool children and one offers part-day preschool programs. Over 550 children are enrolled daily in these three programs. The Family Day Care program is another section with the primary responsibility of training and licensing family day care providers who wish to operate their own child care business while living in base housing units. On a monthly basis, our 95 providers care for over 600 children during regular working hours, evenings, and weekends.

As noted above, the setting for the practicum project was the youth activities' center. The project implemented an orientation program for school-age child care workers and parents that will continue to be offered through the youth center training program. The youth program is

the third section within the youth programs flight. Concerned with supporting youth, this program offers recreational activities and youth development programs that meet the social, emotional, cognitive and intellectual needs of youth. The school-age care program is a major component of the youth program. The overall program serves children from six to eighteen years of age.

This very extensive program supports several specialized activities. A separate Gymnastics Center offers 35 classes weekly to include a competitive team. With an enrollment of over 400 children and youth, the program meets the needs of many families. This type of activity is not usually offered through a youth activities' center; however, the unique location on a small island in the pacific allows for expansion of services to military families. The youth are able to participant in the same kind of activities that they would normally use if they lived in the continental United States. The Hickam Fliers are the current Hawaii state champions in level 5 team competition. The program that is located in an old warehouse was recently renovated by a parent volunteer group. Continually expanding, gymnastics is very popular and well received by base participants.

A Skateboard Center is another specialized activity that offers three half-pipe ramps and street obstacles. The center, known as the Hanger, is a favorite with island teenagers. Two new facilities opened recently including a Kidsport Fun and Fitness Center that provides instructional fitness programs and an outdoor skating rink to further meet the interests of our youth.

Youth sports programs offer competitive team and individual sports clinics throughout the year. The emphasis of the sports program is to teach skills and to de-emphasize competition. Social programs include special events such as seasonal holiday programs, weekly activities, lock-ins, field trips, and self-directed recreational activities.

As mentioned earlier, the area of concern for this practicum project was the school-age care program. This youth program has had the greatest increases in demand for service by our customers for the past several years. With increased numbers of working parents since the 1980's, the youth program began offering care for children whose parents were unavailable during the hours immediately before- and-after-school. The purpose is to serve the needs of parents by providing youth fun and exciting opportunities to both recreate and learn in an appropriate environment. The program supports the Air Force mission by contributing to community development and allowing parents to go to work knowing their children are in a safe and healthy setting. Air Force goals and objectives of the school-age care program are listed below:

--To provide supervised care and developmental experiences for children, ages 5 to 12 years of age, during the hours before and after school, on school holidays, and in the summer months

--To provide curriculum to achieve long-range goals for children that meet their social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs

--To help youth develop their fullest potential

--To assist parents by offering a program for their children in a safe and secure environment

--To improve communication among family members, and

--To protect the safety and health of children. (Buckley, 1992)

The program serves roughly 100 school-age children during the school-year and increases to 250 children for full-time care during the summer and holiday seasons. Activities are designed to meet the individual needs of the participants. Educational programs are planned during the school-year to include crime prevention, fire safety, health days, and first aid. Youth enrolled in the program have the opportunity to join any of the other instructional classes. Examples include music classes such as the recorder, flute, piano and guitar; dance lessons such as tap, ballet, and

jazz, karate, hula, gymnastics and kidsports. In-line skating workshops have also highlighted this program at the nearby multi-purpose recreation court. At least twice a year, contracted sports specialists visit the base to teach clinics that will introduce sports skills to the youth. Last year, we had professionals teaching soccer and basketball skills to our summer day campers.

The Youth Center facility has a large game room area, snack bar, music and dance room, social area, arts and craft's room, and a full-sized gymnasium. Although quite spacious, the center does not have areas to store personal belongings, to offer privacy for children to gather together in small social groups, or to house long-term projects that is needed in an age appropriate program. Although fortunate to have several different facilities, there is not adequate space to provide a developmentally appropriate program for school-age children..

In addition to the physical environment, there are other concerns that present challenges to the program staff. The Military Child Care Act of 1989 established wages and salary benefits for child caregivers, added extensive training programs, authorized new positions, and provided matching funds to parent fees for child development programs. The matching funds are provided through appropriated taxpayers' dollars as authorized by Congress. Since that time most of the Air Force child development programs have received the time and attention needed to provide quality child care programs. The Act only implemented policies within the child development program and did not include those offered at the youth center. This lack of support has greatly affected the ability of youth programs to provide consistent quality care.

The program attempts to meet the goals as stated earlier. The current program is offered daily from 6:30 A.M. until 8:00 A. M. After the direct-care staff escorts the children to school, they usually leave work until the program resumes at 1:00 P. M. in the afternoons. The children are picked-up by their parents no later than 5:30 P.M. Many daily programs are offered to children to include outdoor games, sports, arts, homework areas and self-directed play. Special

events are also part of the program as well as field trips off the base. Swimming is available at least once a week and trips to the beach are very popular. During school holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, spring break and summer vacation, the program is expanded to offer care eleven hours a day.

Current staff supporting this program includes a director, a coordinator, an office assistant, and eight recreation aides that increases to over thirty during the summer months. Although the program director has had extensive experience, most of the other staff members have little or no formal education or experience working with young children. Hiring trained staff is extremely difficult in this area. Those choosing to work with children normally go to the child development centers since salaries are considerably higher than what can be paid by the youth program.

Two years ago, in order to attempt to provide a higher quality summer program, the summer day camp program was contracted to a university. Students studying youth recreation and child development agreed to provide a recreationally based program to youth. Although generally successful, the program has had many challenges and its continued presence is questionable.

Role in the Setting

This project was undertaken by the branch administrator with the support of the staff and upper leadership. The goals of the youth programs flight include the following:

a. To create the Commander's Office of Dependent Support

b. To promote shared utilization of facilities

c. To serve children 0-18 years of age in one organization

d. To promote coordination of activities especially during wartime

e. To enhance funding and staffing of youth programs

f. To clarify child care and youth programs not 'recreation only' (Schmalzreid, 1993).

As the branch administrator, it is my responsibility to identify installation needs for child care and youth services. It is the author's position to design, implement, and evaluate programs for children and youth. Obtaining resources for the programs is still another part of my position as well as managing the implementation of flight-wide training programs. The staff orientation program currently offered to new employees working with the school-age care program needs upgrading. Because of the increased emphasis on this particular program by Air Force leadership, the time is right to expand the program as needed to ensure quality care standards.

Chapter II

The Problem

Problem Statement

The program lacked initial orientation training to fully acquaint new staff with the developmental needs of school-aged children. It did not sufficiently address the ethical codes of conduct expected of early childhood educators. Additionally, quality care standards had not been established. Basic program components needed to be thoroughly explained to staff. A couple of these issues included school-age environments and appropriate supplies and equipment needed for a self-directed program. The school-age care program is staffed primarily by recreation aides serving as the primary caregivers. Several factors that continually affect the ability to offer quality care include the reality that new employees are normally inexperienced in working with children, paid low wages with minimal benefits, and experience quick burnout. This usually results in high turnover. Supervisors and staff have a difficult time coping with day-to-day problems because they are basically unskilled in caring for young children.

Documentation of the Problem

There are many factors that contribute to this problem. A major issue is hiring an unskilled work force. There is a military spouse preference law that places a requirement on federal installations to hire spouses of active duty personnel as a first choice. Although this law is appropriate in most cases, it adds to an already difficult problem. Many spouses hired do not have a desire to work with children. Their primary motive in accepting a position is to make an additional income for their family. They do not realize that working with children requires a great deal of patience and caring. Many of these spouses do not have either the formal education or the experience that would give them the necessary skills to work successfully with young children.

They usually do not have adequate information available to them to provide a quality school-age care program. Because of the requirement to give preference to these individuals, we tend to spend a great deal of time teaching the basics over and over again.

The management staff is also untrained in areas such as early childhood education which makes it difficult for them to train others. This inability to provide appropriate on-the-job training to new employees is just another problem in the pursuit to offer quality school-age care programs for our children and youth.

Another contributing factor is that wages and benefits paid to the new employee are not adequate compared to the requirements of the position. With no formal education or experience required, lower entry wages are the norm for most new employees. Also, a new youth center employee who has little or no experience working with children is paid lower than those hired to work in one of the child development centers.

Still another problem is the current training offered to the employee once hired. The new employee spends approximately sixteen hours viewing developmental videos and reading procedural materials when first hired. A few of these basics include the prevention of child abuse, health and safety standards and guidance techniques. At that point, the employee begins working with children. Within three months, the employee receives additional training in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid. Although there are several other training's offered throughout the year, a comprehensive orientation training program that will enable the new employee to understand the need for quality care is not available. There is not enough concentration on specific child development issues during the initial days of employment.

Since parents are responsible for the full cost of care, the number of employees available to the program is yet another problem. Fees that parents are willing to pay for a quality program

are less than the actual costs. As mentioned earlier, although the Military Child Care Act provided shared costs for child development programs, it did not include the school-age care program in the same bill. Although the cost of the existing program is lower than off-base programs, complaints are received from parents that the program still costs too much. In Hawaii, the public school system subsidizes an after-school program called A+ for approximately one third the cost that we are able to charge. If we were to charge fees comparable to the A+ program, the program would be extremely large. In general, our program activities are preferred; however, many parents choose to enroll their children in the A+ program specifically because of the cost. An expected grant from the federal government for the next three to five years will help offset the total cost of care and should affect the current fee structure.

It may be that the organization structure of the school-age program needs realignment. The current staff are all recreation aides. The primary leader that works with the recreation aides is also in need of training in child development. Because of her personal lack of knowledge in this subject matter, the position is not being used to the fullest potential. There is a need to evaluate the classification of duties for all staff working within this particular program area.

The youth program has only two appropriated fund positions as compared to twenty-seven for the child development programs. Appropriated fund positions are those positions paid by funds authorized through the United States Congress. These personnel expenses help keep parent fees at a lower than normal level. The director and the social program director are the only authorized positions at this time. The third position is expected to be funded within the next year. This new position will be a coordinator for the school-age program. Just this one additional position paid through appropriated funds will greatly assist parents by lowering the overall cost of care. It is to be hoped that monthly fees can be adjusted at that time to better meet the needs of all the families.

Another challenge that exists is continually having the correct number of staff to accomplish work tasks to ensure a quality program. Because we are constantly hiring and training new staff, the employees that have been with the program for an extended period of time tend to have their training needs ignored. Once the orientation program is established, a continuous training program should be developed in order to meet the needs of the staff throughout the year.

Facilities are another concern. Until recently, the primary goal of the youth program was to offer recreational activities. Except for specifically planned programs, the youth center was used as a drop-in recreation center. Structured programs and supervised care were not the responsibility of the youth program. As a result of this limited function, youth centers were built with large open game rooms instead of classrooms and snack bars instead of kitchens. There are many new Air Force requirements that will allow the program to greatly improve services through building expansion and renovation.

Adequate equipment and supplies are another area of concern. These resources are primarily supported through parent fees. Striving to provide service to all military children, youth programs have kept the cost of care at a fairly low rate. The lack of adequate income has prevented the organization from obtaining needed items. Many major purchase items are postponed when funding is not available.

The last factor that contributes to this problem is the lack of a parent involvement program. Although parents volunteer for special activities from time to time, they are not involved with program content. It would be helpful if staff asked the parents to share their interests and abilities with the children from time to time. In this way, we could teach children about other people and the world in which they live.

II. Analysis of the Problem

There was a need to address changes within the organization that would produce competent, cheerful and well-trained employees. The lack of training to fully acquaint staff with the developmental needs of school-age children is a special concern of this agency. This project addressed these issues by implementing an orientation training program that will assist program staff in developing the skills and abilities needed to be confident in providing the necessary program activities.

Comments made in the literature have recognized many of the situations already described as being problems which prevent the provision of quality care in early childhood programs. In a recent position statement on compensation, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published several opinions. One being that it is "crucial that our programs employ personnel with the knowledge and abilities needed to provide good care and education for our nation's youngest citizens" ("NAEYC Compensation," 1993, p. 2). NAEYC feels that if the society cares about quality education for our young children, existing situations should be corrected. It is necessary to ensure that early childhood services are affordable through public and private support. We must also "rectify the inadequate compensation of staff" ("NAEYC Compensation," 1993, p. 2). Early childhood professionals should be paid equivalent to other professionals with the same educational level and experiences. Hildebrand (1993) likewise reinforces this position when she writes that "salaries of teachers and caregivers must be raised to a level in line with the level of education and experience required for the high-quality performance standards parents and society expects" (p. 205). Within the military child development programs, this compensation issue has been corrected. The topic is relevant to the school-age care staff.

With the changes in family structures requiring full-day care for school-age children, it is essential that we change the way we traditionally provide service to our customers. Recently a

study conducted by the U. S. Army and presented at an Air Force conference by Dr. Beverly Schmalzreid concluded that this is the only way we will be able to meet future needs. The study specifically stated "that the youth population was moving from preschool to school-age." The committee also noted that "A high percentage of both parents of children of school-age are employed outside the home." Another finding noted that there is approximately 71,140 children needing before- and after-school supervision. "These children are the dependents of single and dual military and children of active duty and civilian working families. There is currently a total of 149,041 children between 6 and 11 years of age projected within the next three-to-five years" (Schmalzreid, 1994).

Currently, there are no qualification requirements for initial employment as a youth recreation leader. Because of the low entry wages, educational and/or experience requirements do not exist. There is a need to evaluate the current requirements for employment. The program should identify specific skills and abilities required for all employment positions working with youth.

There is a staff of eight who work directly with the school-age program. The coordinator, who had previously worked with another youth program, has been with this program only four months. Three others that began about a year ago had no prior training. The newest group of four have been hired within the past four months with little experience working with young children.

This is primarily due to the military spouse preference law mentioned earlier. In Hawaii, it is almost impossible to hire anyone outside the military system because most military families need a second income. The reason the preference law exists is that for many years' employers throughout the world refused to hire military spouses because they could not be considered permanent employees. As military members moved from one area to another; they found it

increasingly difficult to financially support their families. It is the author's opinion that there is a need for this law; however, it does place special difficulties on some organizations who require specialized training. The child development program began a very extensive training program that provides the necessary training for spouses. As of this date, the youth program has not received the same level of support. During the next few months, a similar training course will begin throughout installations for school-age programs. This project will serve as an introductory course prior to the implementation of the school-age modules.

There is also a need to further clarify the duties of recreation aides. Within the organization of the school-age program, specific duties and responsibilities need to be assigned to the program staff. Because the youth program is very large, employees receive work assignments that are outside their particular areas of responsibility. While striving to respond to the many needs of the customers, quality standards are sometimes ignored when there are immediate needs to be met.

In the view of the writer, the program will be able to dedicate the responsibilities of this program to one individual with the addition of the new school-age coordinator. This position is needed to implement many new requirements of this program. The additional position will serve to enhance the overall youth program.

Supervisors, staff and parents have difficulty coping with day-to-day challenges in the school-age program. New employees do not differentiate between age groups. They also tend to treat children as they were treated when they were young. They immediately want to "write-off" a child that is difficult to handle and dismiss him/her from the program. They usually do not choose to continue working with children who present a challenge to them. Any unusual circumstance beyond their own level of patience becomes an emergency.

It is this writer's opinion, this is a result of an inadequate training program. Employees should be required to complete certain training sessions before working with young children. It is imperative that program supervisors ensure new employees receive training on developmental needs and interests of school-age children prior to their first day working with the children. This training should concentrate on quality care standards consistent with developmental needs of children as established through national associations such as NAEYC. By introducing these standards early, the supervisors and direct care staff will be focused on the issues of providing a developmentally appropriate program for school-age children.

At this point, the question becomes "Why do the youth programs have such a long list of problems?" It is important to again return to NAEYC's position statement on compensation which states that "the lack of resources facing many early childhood programs and the concomitant inadequate compensation of early childhood personnel is rooted in this nation's chronic indifference toward young children....as a nation, we historically have placed less value on any type of work done for or with young children" ("NAEYC Compensation," 1993, p. 1). In other literature, Hildebrand (1993) stated that "unless salaries do improve, child service workers will move to other jobs where the pay and benefits are enticing" (p. 205). Since personnel costs are normally the largest expense in a program budget, they are the most affected when program resources are insufficient. This is the problem experienced by the school-age program. Since the inception of the Military Child Care Act, there simply has not been enough time or energy spent on youth programs from higher headquarters. Without this direct support, the program does not receive the resources that would help to ensure quality. Perhaps this in itself is an example of undervaluing the services provided to base youth.

In 1993, the National School-Age Child Care Alliance (NSACCA) sent a survey to its members prior to the annual conference. Later, these results were reported:

--School-age child care programs had increased dramatically within the past ten-to-twenty years

--Only 3% of the organizations preferred a professional certification program

--89% of training received since working in school-age child care was from workshops and conferences with only 28% from college courses.

--89% of the respondents planned to continue working in school-age child care with 69% reporting they enjoyed the work.

--Others reported the job too demanding, poor pay, difficult parents, and lack of benefits as the primary reasons for leaving the profession.

--If they left, they would move to teaching and management positions.

--To stay in the field, better pay, support, recognition, respect, and benefits were the required incentives. ("NSACCA ," 1993)

It appears that when formally trained and paid adequate wages; current school-age professionals would continue working with young children.

Other readings discuss the affordability of quality care. One NAEYC publication discusses some barriers to providing good services. To summarize, they believe that many programs can not afford the high costs of quality since their income relies on parent fees. Since many of the families with young children live on very tight budgets, they often cannot afford good programs even when fees are kept low. Because of these very real life situations, programs find it difficult to raise fees to truly reflect the costs of providing good service ("The Full Cost," 1990). These comments are reflective of the problems within the school-age program. Program quality has been affected without reliable income from sources other than parents.

Hildebrand (1993) likewise suggests that "parents who can afford to must pay their share, and others must be assisted with public or philanthropic resources" (p. 205). It seems to be the general opinion of early childhood writers that most families are expected to pay the full cost of

care with limited assistance because of the lack of value assigned to early childhood services. Since many low and moderate income parents are unable to afford the full cost of a quality program, prices have been depressed. Without a doubt, this is what happens within the military youth program. Usually fees are set at the lowest possible level in order to address the needs of the families served. Without the appropriate amount of income, we have been unable to provide a quality program. In contrast, the A+ program is able to offer low monthly rates because it is heavily subsidized by state funds.

Another item to address is staff and child ratios and group sizes. The Air Force requirement is currently one staff member to fifteen children (1:15). It is the writer's opinion that this ratio is unrealistic if we desire to provide quality care programs. Many of the readings in the literature suggested a 1:12 or even a 1:10 ratio with two ratio groups being together at all times. By using the 1:15 ratio with two groups, we have a cluster of 30 children with two adults. Although, this large group size can work for some programs, it is impractical to think that it can be used as a standard ratio and group size for the program. Even with a highly trained staff, problems occur. The current ratio and group size at the base preschool are 1:12 with two groups together in one room. After observing these groups over the past year, it is my opinion that quality care suffers with such a large group because of the constant stress on the caregivers.

Initial training for school-age child care providers is minimal. Upon their employment, the youth program director familiarizes the new employee with the youth program. Short videos explain developmental needs, leadership skills, and guidance techniques. The employee reviews the employee handbook and operating instructions. This initial training program does not offer enough guidance in any one particular area.

Very shortly after beginning to work with children, many new employees seem to revert to their own personal methods of caring for them without regard to guidance procedures provided to

them. It is necessary to introduce basic guidance techniques early. By presenting staff with the appropriate position statements from the national association, we will be able to present information properly. It is important that management continually stress the importance of using quality care standards within the program. Another area that will help the direct care staff is clarification of the ethical codes of conduct for a child care worker.

Further complicating the issue of training is the fact that the youth program has only two professionally trained managers. These managers are the only employees who have either the education or the experience that qualifies them as recreation specialists. Until additional professional staff can be hired, the program will continue having personnel problems. Another element that also complicates this issue is their general experiences are in the field of recreation instead of child development. Their interests and abilities lie in offering traditional recreational programs normally offered in a parks and recreation setting. Accepting the responsibility of caring for school-age children has been a difficult adjustment.

Michelle Seligson also expressed concerns in her writings that "when children reach school-age, many parents find themselves as outcasts from family support systems. All too often, that first school-bell rings an end to available child care. Parents and children alike must wonder why the family support service marketplace has suddenly abandoned them" (Seligson & Allenson, 1993, p. 2). For the past several years, there has been a wide division in support parents receive when using child development programs as compared to the youth programs. Because of the matching fees received by child development centers, parent fees are at a reasonable level. Once their child enters kindergarten and moves to the school-age program, they experience a substantial difference in the fee structure. The child development program has several income categories that have helped keep fees moderate.

This is one of the changes expected in the youth program within the next year. The program is supported primarily from parent fees. Current fees are $90 a month per child for before-and after-school care with additional fees being charged for full-day camps. Since this fee is triple the cost of the state subsidized A+ Program, we do not feel that it would be appropriate to increase them at this time.

To ensure a variety of activities, a program must continually have on-hand the necessary supplies and equipment. It will be necessary to develop a recurring resource list that will assist the program staff when they are placing orders for equipment and supplies. Upon initial employment, the new employee does not have a variety of activity ideas available to him/her. It is imperative that regular workshops are offered and an abundance of hands-on activities shared with all members of the direct care staff.

Normally, parent fees are used to pay program staff. They are also used to purchase some supplies. The program management strives to purchase most of the supplies needed through available year-end funding and donations made to the program. Although the program has been able to obtain most of the resources needed, it is imperative that a regular funding source be obtained to ensure quality.

Earlier, we briefly described the youth facilities. These facilities are among the best offered within the Air Force. The main center has over 11,000 square feet with three activity rooms, snack bar, and full-size gymnasium. The new fitness center will also be a boost to the program and allow for an increased number of spaces for school-age care as well as many new activities. The outdoor setting is very plentiful with a very large playground structure located next to the building. The outdoor park also hosts a large multi-purpose recreation court used for skating, basketball, and games. There is a large area for outdoor play.

Although we are thankful for what is available, there are difficulties in presenting a quality school-age program. As one of their principles of a developmentally appropriate school-age program, Albrecht and Plantz (1993) wrote that:

> Environments in developmentally appropriate school-age child care programs are arranged to accommodate children and youth individually, in small groups, and in large groups, and to facilitate a wide variety of activities and experiences....the environment should be arranged to accommodate a variety of activities and experiences including individual, small-group, and large-group activities. (p. 10)

The existing facilities clearly meet these expectations. However, we do not have areas for children to personalize since the program shares space with other activities.

There is no space to set-up permanent areas for personal use or store long-term projects for completion at a later date. We also do not have adequate space for program staff to plan activities or to just rest and relax during breaks. From the time the youth center opens, it is a busy hub of activity with business transactions being accomplished, classes in session, youth sports inquiries, and self-directed or planned programs in process. Although one of the most important programs, the school-age care program is just one of the many daily programs offered. Parents who have had their children enrolled in the child development program experience quite a culture shock when they see the fast-paced program at the youth center. A hope is to obtain a separate facility for this program that will alleviate many of these concerns.

The staff also does not use equipment and supplies afforded to them properly. Space to secure resources is limited. Because much of the equipment is stored in an outside storage area, the staff limits resources for children. Principle Four of the Developmentally Appropriate Practice in School-Age Child Care Programs, relates that "Self-selection, rather than staff selection, of activities and experiences predominates in developmentally appropriate school-age child care

programs. Schedules allow great flexibility for children and youth. Required participation in activities and experiences is limited" (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993, p. 7). Since the typical school day is fairly structured, offers limited choices and requires participation, it is important that a developmentally appropriate school-age child care program give children the opportunity to select their own daily activities. Providing children with a variety of choices is vital to effective programming.

To accommodate these requirements within the existing program, there is a need to increase staff training in several areas. A specialized workshop introducing self-selected activities is one important area to be explored. It will also be necessary to offer a course in the purchase of equipment and supplies.

The program does not have an active parent group. Although there is a youth advisory committee that meets quarterly, most information shared in this setting is information on upcoming special events, programs and activities. It has been difficult to obtain parental support for this age group except for selected projects. There is currently a fairly active parent group working with the child development program managers. However, it seems that once a child reaches school-age, the parents are no longer interested in becoming involved in another committee. Actually, several parents do volunteer for youth sports programs, scouting and social events. When it relates to the school-age program, parents do not seem to have the time to become involved. Occasionally, they will help with field trips, renovations and special projects; however, forming committees that require time and effort away from their children after normal working hours is understandably difficult.

There is a need for staff to keep parents informed regarding the children. This is an area that should be empathized in the initial orientation program. Asking parents how they feel about the program and what they want for their children is important and should be a part of all school-

age programs. By inviting them to the planned training program, we may be able to gain their confidence in the program and receive this much needed information from them

Chapter III

Goals and Objectives

Goal

It has been established that that there are several issues that exist within the current school-age child care program that need to be better explained to staff and parents. It has also been established that the existing training program does not provide staff with a developmentally appropriate curriculum which would ensure a quality program. Therefore, the problem, from the perspective of the practicum, was identified as a lack of an appropriate training program for staff which focused on enhancing their skills in the area of school-age care. The goal of this practicum project was to provide an opportunity for staff and parents to increase their knowledge of the developmental needs and interests of school-age children through the implementation and development of an orientation training program.

Objectives

Practicum objectives to be accomplished during the ten week implementation period were identified as follows:

(1) By the end of the second week, to develop the initial training requirements for staff and parents which identified quality care standards and the developmental needs of school age children. Through the distribution and evaluation of questionnaires to staff and parents, the expected outcome was to incorporate their specific concerns into an orientation training program.

(2) By the end of the seventh week, to develop a training session for school-age staff and interested parents. The expected outcome was a training session that would identify the

developmental needs of school-age children, quality care standards, the code of conduct for child care workers, appropriate environments, and required supplies and equipment.

(3) By the end of the eighth week, to implement a training session for staff and interested parents. The expected outcome of this goal was the presentation of a developmentally appropriate program to the current staff and those parents wishing to attend. At the end of the session, an evaluation form was to be distributed to participants which would be used to identify other training requirements.

(4) By the end of the tenth week, to make recommendations for future training based on the evaluation results of the orientation program. This objective addressed the need to determine additional training needs that would continuously provide information to staff and parents while recognizing that not all the required information could be effectively implemented within the limited time given for the practicum project. After compiling the results, future training recommendations would to be provided to the program management.

Chapter IV

Solution Strategy

Review of existing programs, models, and approaches

Based on a review of the literature on school-age child care, a number of programs, models and approaches can be identified. Many of today's writers discuss the need to offer a developmentally appropriate program for this age group. Koralek, Colker & Dodge (1993) define a developmentally appropriate program as one that is "planned and carried out based on a knowledge of how children grow and what they can do--socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically - at each stage of development" (p. 1). Sisson (1990) writes of the need "to provide for the children a variety of developmentally appropriate activities, including expressive art, construction, active play, sports, games, dramatic play, science, cooking, crafts and reading" (p. 2).

Albrecht and Plantz (1993) set the standard for a developmentally appropriate school-age child care program when they wrote that:

> Developmentally appropriate school-age child care programs are tailored to the developmental characteristics and needs of the children and youth they serve. Programs are mindful that children and youth change greatly during the school-age years and that the rate and nature of change vary considerably, both among children and youth and across developmental areas within the same child or youth. Programs approach these developmental realities as opportunities, rather than as problems. (p.1)

There are many specific examples of what is and what is not appropriate at different ages and stages of childhood. For the purpose of this practicum, it is important to fully introduce this concept to the school-age staff.

Creating appropriate environments can be taught. Lawyer-Tarr (1991) suggests that "programs should set up a program structure designed to meet the needs of 5 to 12 year olds, not a program where children must modify or restrict their needs to fit into the program's structure" (p. 21). Lawyer-Tarr (1991) stresses the importance of giving children choices, involving them in planning activities and giving them "time to daydream, imagine, and engage in independent creative thinking" (p. 23).

Another approach to offering an appropriate program is mentioned in the March, 1994, issue of School-Age NOTES by Betsy Arns: "If, it is our responsibility to do our best to help each child to develop to his or her highest potential, we must address the fact that many children need to learn the skills that allow them to be successful in life somewhere other than school or home. For many, the place that can offer the most support and success is the school age program" (p. 3). Too often, youth program staff do not realize the importance they may be in the lives of the children in their care

For many, the program staff is the only support, other than parents, that the child may have in the local area. Military families depend a great deal on the services provided them when they are in a geographical area that is uncommon to their usual way of life. Many of these children also live in single parent families. A successful youth program definitely impacts the well-being of these families. For this reason, it is vital that program staff understand the developmental needs of the children.

Another approach addresses the importance of allowing school age children free time. "Children do not need to be kept busy. SACC centers are the preeminent place to teach children values of play, playing hard, playing fair, and resting" (Ollhoff, 1994, p. 1). The key idea in this

quotation reflects the right of a child to simply rest without feeling the pressure that they are wasting time. This is also an important point to be made to staff.

Readings differ in the amount of participation expected of parents in a school age program. Essentially they should help provide guidance about their own child to ensure continuity from home, school and the before- and after-school program. School-age writers often refer to the need to develop partnerships with community service agencies. "As children and youth make progress in transferring some of their attachment from the family to the larger world of friends and community, they need opportunities to connect with and participate in the world around them" (Albrecht & Plantz, 1993, p. 17). This is yet another important point to be addressed in a training program.

Specific training in areas of special concerns is yet another approach to be used. Although there are several areas of concern, the results of the questionnaires may produce others. For example, guidance issues are a continual challenge to new staff. Experience has proven to this writer that the orientation training is not the proper setting to answer concerns about guidance. Although this is one of the most important areas to be covered in today's program, presenting basic child development theory before going into an in-depth session on guidance is preferable.

Still another approach that could be used is to ask other base and community resources to provide the training. Many training's are presented to the youth program staff throughout the year. A specific course on the suggested topics is difficult to find in the community.

The Air Force is planning to expand and improve school-age programs to address the current trends within the military. This year $13 million is being distributed to installations to assist with many needs. The current plan includes contracting with an individual to manage the

program. Planned improvements include a monitoring system, a specialized training program, and improving the space currently used for the program.

A weekly training program presenting ideas to staff is yet another way to address the issues. The Air Force is currently developing a training program that will consist of thirteen modules covering areas such as safety, health and nutrition, creating environments, promoting physical development, and providing positive guidance. This proposal will introduce the fundamentals of offering a quality program. Once the modules are received by the organization, they will serve to reinforce lessons already learned.

Description of Solution Strategy

The NAEYC paper which discusses the issue of quality reports what must exist when offering a quality program. There must be "good relationships between adults and children, knowledgeable teacher-caregivers who understand how children grow and learn, adequate staff compensation to attract and keep good staff, and a good learning and working environment" ("The Full Cost," 1990). These conditions were the basis of the orientation training session.

Several options were available in choosing a strategy that addressed the challenge of developing an orientation training program. When the Air Force leadership mentions that one of its objectives is to expand and improve the school-age program, it is referring to the need of establishing a more structured program. This training began the process of change. The development of an orientation that introduces current issues serve as an introduction to the already planned school-age training program. This training session focused on introducing the developmental needs and interests of school-age children to program staff and parents.

The first objective was accomplished through the distribution of surveys to both parents and staff. One survey determined parent expectations (Appendix B) while the others explored staff knowledge of school-age programming (Appendices C-E). Permission was received from the author of Blueprint for Action, Achieving Center-Based Change Through Staff Development, Paula Jorde Bloom, to use the questionnaires in this publication (Appendix G) for this project. The results of these questionnaires determined the final content of the training. Part of the process was to develop handouts to be used as training tools during the session. The handouts provided staff with concrete information pertaining to the issues. The training session was presented by the author.

The solution strategy was designed to provide an opportunity for parents and staff to increase their knowledge about the developmental needs of youth. It was also designed to introduce the staff to the ethical code of conduct expected of child care workers as described by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Quality care standards were presented as written by early childhood educators. Approval was obtained from the authors, Koralek, Colker, and Dodge, to use information from the publication, The What, Why, and How of High-Quality Early Childhood Education: A Guide for On-Site Supervision as shown in appendix F. Appropriate environments were taught. Employees were provided information to develop an understanding for the need to use a variety of equipment and supplies. Last, but not least, parents and staff were given an opportunity to address their own concerns and to form valuable partnerships with each other. Recommendations for future training sessions will be made to program management at the completion of practicum.

Calendar Plan for Implementation Activities

A calendar plan detailing the activities during the practicum is included in appendix A. The plan includes the specific goals and objectives which were accomplished. It includes an

action plan with expected outcomes. Responsibilities had been assigned and the time frame had been determined. The calendar plan was helpful during the practicum and facilitated the accurate completion of each step noted in the action plan.

Chapter V

Strategy Employed - Action Taken and Results

Description of the Implementation Phase

The goal of the practicum was to provide an opportunity for staff and parents to increase their knowledge of the developmental needs and interests of school-age children through the implementation and development of an orientation program. By the end of the implementation period, this goal was achieved. The detailed calendar plan of action is located in appendix A. The first week of the implementation phase was used to distribute several surveys to parents and staff. The surveys were to be used to ascertain specific interests and needs expected from each group of individuals. There was also a meeting with the youth activities' management team to discuss preliminary training needs of the current school-age program staff.

The second week was spent gathering questionnaires from respondents, talking to parents about the planned training and scheduling the orientation session. All of these tasks were performed with the assistance of the school-age program director. An addition to the practicum at this time was a training session used to explain the upcoming orientation program to the school-age staff.

Week three began the initial discussions of what the training should offer after reviewing the questionnaires. Several of the parents had concerns about a homework area, structured activities and accountability procedures. From comments on the questionnaires, the team determined to make several changes prior to the actual training session.

At the weekly staff meeting during the fourth week, the program director discussed the parent concerns with the staff. When discussing the new orientation program, the staff agreed that is was important to require the completion of certain training prior to actually being assigned to a group of children. The current staff expressed a desire to help develop the orientation program based on the challenges they would encounter during the practicum implementation period.

At the beginning of the same week, publicity as shown in Appendix H was initiated. A flyer inviting the parents to participate in the project was distributed. Several weeks later, a letter with the planned agenda was sent to parents requesting class participation. Parents did not seem interested in attending the orientation at this time due to the holiday season. Only eight families participated by filling out the Parent Feedback Survey. However, they have expressed a desire to attend a session in the future.

I began researching the existing literature for appropriate handouts to be used in the training. It was not my intent to produce original handouts; but to use existing information from selected authors. In all cases, the original authors were given the appropriate references. A sampling of handouts used have been provided in Appendix I; however, a brief description of each is described below:

a. Youth Programs Flight Training Program handout describes the thirteen modules currently used in the child development training program.

b. Quality Care Standards presents seven important points needed to ensure quality programming as discussed by Koralek, Colker and Dodge. These standards stress an understanding of child development, individualized programs meeting the needs of every child and

safe environments. Other points presented in the handout are self-directed play, respecting children's needs, listening to parents and specialized training for staff.

c. The Principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice in School-Age Child Care Programs defines a developmentally appropriate program for school-age children.

d. The Power of Play is a compilation of several points about play as presented by Gary Seibert, the founder of Kidsports International, Inc.

e. Components of a Curriculum suggest ideas needed when preparing a school-age curriculum.

During the next three weeks, we followed the calendar plan of action as written. It was difficult to accomplish some of the tasks such as completing the handouts. Many of the support agencies were at minimal staffing during the holiday season. Still, we managed to complete the reproduction of the handouts prior to the training session. We were continually discussing the program with the parents with the desire to have a few at the training session.

Eleven staff members attended the orientation training during the eighth week. All of the previously mentioned subjects were addressed to include developmentally appropriate practices for school-age children and quality care standards. In addition, a video presentation entitled "Keys to Quality in School-Age Child Care" produced by Roberta Newman was shown for the first time. The training and curriculum specialist also addressed some guidance and discipline issues that had occurred during the holiday day camp. The surveys were again filled out to evaluate differences from the beginning of the project. The final two weeks were spent reviewing the evaluations and determining future training needs.

Results of Strategy Employed

Objective One. The objective to develop initial training requirements for staff and parents that identified quality care standards and the developmental needs of school-age children was achieved the first two weeks. The method used was the distribution of the four questionnaires mentioned in Chapter IV from the publication Blueprint in Action. Each was reprinted with the authors permission. The results can be found with each questionnaire in the appendices.

The information found in each was enlightening. Two career-orientated individuals completed the Professional Activities Questionnaire (Appendix C). One spends roughly fifteen hours a week over and above what she is paid for in activities related to early childhood. Although neither are members of a professional organization, both read professional journals and magazines regularly. They reported reading from one to three professional books last year and both attended at least one conference. Finally, both of these individuals expect to be working in the field of youth programs in three years and would have chosen the career a second time if able to make the same decision again. These last responses are similar to the results from the National School-Age Child Care Association survey in 1993 that concluded that many school-age program directors enjoy their work and intend to continue working with this age-group in the future.

These respondents had numerical scores of seven and eight out of twenty points on the actual survey. As indicated by the authors of Blueprint for Action, these scores "provide important background data on prospective candidates for employment" (p. 242). This is an interesting comment since this author is personally familiar with these respondents. One has been working with youth programs approximately ten years. She has no formal college or university training; however, she is a totally dedicated professional who is constantly striving to provide excellent programs for school-age children. Her score of eight points is low due to non-

professional memberships, lack of college courses and not presenting workshops or lectures to professional groups. The second individual scored seven points. She was recently graduated from a university and hired as an Air Force Management Intern because of her high grade-point average of over 3.75 and an expressed interest in working with Air Force Youth Programs. Both highly motivated individuals are good role models for staff. They are very interested in their own professional growth. Results of this questionnaire present the need to continually improve personal skills, enhance knowledge and increase abilities in a chosen professional area.

The staff questionnaires were distributed to all of the employees working with the school-age program both at the beginning of the implementation period and immediately following the orientation training session. The Role Perception Questionnaire can be found in appendix D and the Staff Orientation Assessment is located in appendix E with the results obtained.

In the Staff Orientation Assessment, nine of the eleven employees (81%) indicated that they were made to feel comfortable and welcome on their first day of work. Only two of the eleven respondents did not feel the staff knew they were coming to work in the center upon their arrival. The second question pertaining to receiving enough familiarity with the particulars of the program to help through the first days of employment was split six to five or 54.5 percent. One new employee reported that she was "thrust in her job and felt as if every one else thought she should know where things were located."

The next question refers to receiving sufficient background on center policies. Again, the staff was divided by four negative to seven positive responses. Several employees reported that they received background data at a much later date. The fourth question addressed if the employee felt that others were interested in his/her progress. Ten of the employees (91%) reported yes to this question with only one answering no. The final question on this survey

inquired about the employee's desire to know more about policies and procedures. In the pre-training surveys, over 80% of the responses were "no." Once the training was presented, seven out of the eleven (64%) requested more information about child guidance techniques, administrative areas, and new policies for the school-age programs. They also addressed a need for better communication between the management and program staff.

There was no point score assessed to this questionnaire. The authors suggested that since the assessment tool provided open-ended answers, it should be used to "help alert the director to potential misunderstandings about the scope and nature of the position assumed" (Bloom, p. 246) The program management felt this particular tool was very helpful. It provided specific concerns that could be addressed during the orientation training session.

The Role Perception Questionnaire provided questions pertaining to the employees' understanding of their own role responsibilities. The individual scores ranged from a low of 26 to a high of 49 with the medium score of 44. The role clarity score of forty-two was determined by taking the total number of points received and dividing by the number of respondents. An assumption from this score is that staff perceives their jobs are clearly defined. These specific results were determined after the orientation training. Before the increased training sessions, questions were common as to the expectations of particular positions within the overall youth program. It appears that role responsibilities for the school-age program have been defined appropriately to meet staff expectations.

The final survey conducted was the Parent Feedback Survey. There was a very low response from parents. Only eight surveys were received with the results found in Appendix B. Following the authors' advice, a average score of 25.6 points was determined from a range of

eight to forty points for individual surveys. Although there were only a few parent questionnaires received, they had a common theme.

Improvement areas requested included increased supervision, more structure, tutoring opportunities, and keeping children with their own age group. Parents seemed very interested in ensuring the children had the opportunity to complete their homework during the after school program. They expressed a desire to have their children assigned to one individual at all times. This is also a required policy of this program; however, the staff finds it difficult to enforce the policy while also giving children unlimited choices of activities due to the large variety available. The children are not assigned to only one room with the same teacher as is the case in child development centers. We determined this would be one of the areas addressed in the training session.

Most parents felt their children were benefiting from their experiences at the center. Increasing socialization skills, dealing with other children, building self-esteem and self-sufficiency were a few of the positive comments presented. Although we had only a few surveys, we were able to address their concerns in the training program.

The pre-evaluation surveys indicated that the direct care staff did not feel as if they had any control of their program. They felt there was little communication between management and staff. They did not feel that they had very much training before being placed with a group of children. Parents were vague about their interest in attending the training session. The time of year seemed to be an important factor. In the past, we have had good participation from parents at the beginning and end of the school-year. Holiday seasons have never been popular in soliciting participation from parents.

The first outcome, which was to identify specific concerns from parents and staff that could be incorporated into the orientation training plan, was accomplished through the surveys as well as discussions with parents and staff. Without this first initial step, we would not have been able to identify the specific needs of the individuals involved with the program.

Objective Two: The objective to develop the training session for school-age staff and parents was achieved. Most of the practicum period was spent working on this objective. Although it was accomplished, we changed the actual plan from time to time. The staff did not want to wait several weeks before we had one long training session. There were many questions about the expected changes in this program area in the next year. Staff that had been working with us for several months had specific concerns about guidance and discipline. New employees just wanted information. We had several training sessions during this time period to address these concerns. As a result, the current staff helped in the development of the final product. If I were to offer any suggestions to other writers at this time, I would suggest three or four mini-workshops instead of one long workshop during the ten week practicum period.

The second outcome consisted of developing an orientation training program that emphasized the developmental needs of school-age children, quality care standards, the code of conduct for child care workers, appropriate environments, and equipment and supplies. It was difficult to pretend that the existing staff had no previous knowledge of working with school-age children. We decided to adjust the project to meet their needs. The end result is that the orientation training program addresses the above areas as well as the concerns and challenges that the current staff actually experiences. The overall effect is very positive and the outcome was met.

Objective Three: The objective to implement the training session for school-age staff and parents was completed during the eighth week. As I worked on the training session with the program director, the tasks were accomplished within the planned time period. Beginning the first week with a discussion of the workshop with the staff, several members became involved with the project. The program director was vitally important to its overall success. I believe that the positive results on the post evaluations were a direct result of allowing others to become involved with the actual training session. With the help of the program director and the training and curriculum specialist, the actual presentation was well received. With several members of the teaching team, we were able to present a variety of information and teaching styles. The third outcome was the presentation of a developmentally appropriate program for school-age children.

Objective Four: The objective to make recommendations for future training sessions based on the evaluation results of the training were also accomplished. From the survey results, recommendations for several training opportunities were able to be determined. The staff agreed that it was important to introduce many of the concepts before assigning a new employee to a group. They also expressed a desire to have continued educational sessions. The training and curriculum specialist has agreed to continue classes every other week. She is also beginning to do observations of the program while it is in session in order to give feedback to the direct care staff.

Areas to be included in future training sessions were self-directed play, choices, increasing responsibilities of school-age children, long-term projects, and appropriate environments for this age group. Additionally, there was a need to address in more detail subjects such as guidance, health and safety, leading activities as a youth facilitator, and Air Force certification standards. The importance of planning programs to address the developmental needs of school-age children was stressed.

Specific recommendations were made to program management. I felt is was important to continue the orientation training program for all new employees. I also suggested that the program establish individual educational plans for each member of the staff on an annual basis. Another suggestion was to develop a training team to present workshops regularly. Specialized training courses in guidance, age appropriate activities, nutrition, health and safety and others could be offered by outside community resources through personal service contracts. I also recommended that the program increase training and educational requirements for the program staff. Another recommendation was to implement the school-age module training program as soon as received.

After many discussions with parents, I felt I should make the suggestion to the program management to increase their communication efforts to them. The staff is so involved with offering the daily program, they seem to ignore the parents unless there is a problem to be solved. I suggested that the Parent Feedback Survey be made available at all times in order to obtain immediate feedback from parents. I also suggested that a regular system of surveying the parents and staff to determine needs and concerns be established. The results of the surveys could be shared through monthly newsletters which could also be an element of the children's program.

In addition, I recommended that the program increase their efforts to support working parents. Two suggestions included the addition of some family activities and parent training sessions with guest speakers on subjects of interest to parents. A final recommendation was to establish of a parent advisory board that can assist the staff in accomplishing the goals of the program.

There was an unanticipated outcome from the project. Prior to the beginning of the practicum, I had not spent very much time directly with the recreation aids working with the

children. This was an opportunity to return to the center and actually become involved with the program again. Since we implemented several training sessions, I was able to get to know each of them. During the practicum period, we also hired six new employees and lost several others. The training designed for this project was used as their orientation program and it went very well. They received needed information prior to actually working with the children as is the plan.

As a result of working directly with them, the staff seemed eager to discuss their problems with me. I was able to assist them in several areas that may not have been possible had we not been involved in developing the training program. They were also able to provide me with ideas for future workshops. Increased communication between staff and parents is also an added bonus to having completed this project.

Deviations to the original plan have already been mentioned. The time table was changed to a small degree to accommodate the holiday season. The most important change to the project was the added training sessions for the existing staff. There were very few other changes to the original plan. The fourth outcome which was to determine future training needs was achieved.

Roadblocks or Difficulties Encountered

Initially, it was difficult to get the youth activities' staff interested in helping with the training session. Because the staff was already very busy with the daily program, they were not interested in helping me with the orientation training program. Once we started the additional training sessions, they began to see the value in attending. The direct care staff seemed very interested in getting as much information as possible on how to care for this age group. Once we began the implementation, their hesitation seemed to disappear. It is to be hoped that this project

has helped the program management realize the importance of providing adequate training to their employees.

Results of the Practicum as Compared with Literature

I was familiar with the program prior to implementing the project. The obstacles that occurred were expected. The youth program is very large and fast-paced. To make time for training has not usually been a high priority. With the new requirements for the school-age program, the staff will have the opportunity to attend many workshops and conferences.

Sisson discusses the responsibility of the program director "to make sure that a new staff member is adequately oriented to the program philosophy and understands what is expected of him/her on the job" (p. 28). The early questionnaires noted that the employees at that time did not feel as if they were receiving the appropriate information when they reported to work. Survey results indicate that employees were more comfortable with their individual work roles after attending the training session.

One of the most significant results of the practicum is the change of behavior of the direct care staff towards children planning the activity program and making their own choices. In many ways, they felt as if they were already providing choices to the children. However, they did not involve the children in planning activities, nor did they give them the "choice of participating in an activity or not" (Lawyer-Tarr, p. 21).

Helping with homework was another discussion in the training session. A place to do homework has always been available to children. However, the program did not provide assistance to children who wished to complete their homework after school. This was an area in which the parents expressed concerns. Lawyer-Tarr asked the question "As caregivers, it is not

our job to help with homework or teach children what they should learn at school. True or False"(p. 313)? At first, most of the staff responded "true" to this question. After much discussion, we decided that we could do a better job of providing children with the support they needed in completing their homework.

At this time, the employees have a desire to continue training. The initial training answered questions such as "why" we want to program developmentally appropriate programs for school-age children. In the future, we plan to provide the "how" to assist them in providing a high quality school-age program. Overall, the project served as a beginning to a new initiative to enhance the image of the school-age child care program.

Chapter VI

Conclusion - Implications and Recommendations

Conclusions

As noted earlier, the objectives of the practicum were completed positive results for each expected outcome. With the completion of the first objective, the outcome to incorporate the specific concerns from parents and staff were identified. The second outcome of developing an orientation training program for school-age staff and parents was accomplished also. The third objective was achieved when the session was presented during the eighth week. The final outcome was completed when recommendations were presented to the program management.

The results of the outcomes confirm the need for orientation training. The program was well received from the participants. The program staff seemed eager to receive information that helped them in caring for school-age children. Survey results also indicated a need to offer regular training classes to the staff. Some low scores indicated training was needed in several areas.

Implications and Recommendations

In future utilization of this practicum, I recommended the following modifications, practices and additions:

1. Identify the similarities between early childhood programs and school-age child care programs. From a community standpoint, there appears to be a broad difference in the philosophy of both programs especially within the military community.

2. Obtain funding to produce a quality product that will be of interest to participants. A video of the actual program could be useful in the orientation training.

3. Change the orientation training to three one-hour minute sessions instead of presenting the information in a three-hour block. To fully understand the concepts, they should be presented at different times. This will also allow time for a question and answer period.

4. Set-up a meeting with the parents early during the practicum period to explain the project.

5. Increase the training staff to encourage more participation and reduce the overall workload. It would be helpful to ask a parent to help with the training session.

6. The training workshops should continually reinforce concepts that will assist staff in providing a developmentally appropriate school-age child care program.

Dissemination

As noted earlier, the Department of Defense has identified a need for school-age care as one of its priorities. There are many new initiatives being implemented at this time. I plan to continue working closely with those interested in enhancing the overall school-age program for the Department of the Air Force. Hopefully, this research will enable others in the field to understand the challenges presented to youth programs on a daily basis.

The solution strategy utilized in the practicum will continue to be used as part of the youth activities training program. New employees will be required to attend the orientation program with the training and curriculum specialist. Much of the information presented in the practicum project will be presented at that time.

As of this time, this project has not been shared outside the practicum agency. The author has briefly discussed the project with other professionals directly involved in working with military youth. Plans for disseminating the practicum results among professional colleagues include sharing it with the major command specialists for Pacific Air Forces as well as the Air Force Agency youth specialists. Hopefully, by doing so, it will be helpful in determining training needs for all Air Force youth programs.

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APPENDIX A

Calendar Plan of Action

CALENDAR PLAN

GOAL: ***To provide an opportunity for staff and parents to increase their knowledge of the developmental needs and interests of school-age children through the implementation and development of an orientation program. Practicum objectives to be accomplished during the ten week implementation period are:***

OBJECTIVE	*ACTION PLAN*	*OUTCOME*	*RESPONSIBILITY*	*TIME FRAME*
1. To develop initial training requirements for staff and parents which identifies quality care standards and the developmental needs of school age children	1. Distribute the Parent Feedback Survey from Blueprint for Action to parents to determine parent expectations of the school-age program (pre-evaluation)	Identify specific concerns from parents and staff that can be incorporated into orientation training plan	The author of the practicum proposal	Weeks 1 & 2 (Oct. 30- Nov. 12) Week 1
	2. Distribute questionnaires to staff from Blueprint for Action: a. Professional Activities b. Role Perception c. Staff Orientation Assessment (pre-evaluation)			Week 1
	3. Distribute questionnaires to staff and parents			Week 1
	4. Solicit participation			Week 1
	5. Gather questionnaires by pre-set date			Week 2
	6. Collate information obtained			Week 2
	7. Determine if parents are interested in attending a training workshop			Week 2

OBJECTIVE	*ACTION PLAN*	*OUTCOME*	*RESPONSIBILITY*	*TIME FRAME*
2. To develop the training session for school-age staff and parents.	1. Review questionnaires with school-age program director 2. Identify the teaching objectives for workshop 3. Develop workshop introducing developmental needs, ethical code of conduct of early childhood educators, quality care standards, environments, and supplies and equipment. 4. Develop/collect handouts for training session (Principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice in School-Age Child Care Programs, Quality Care Standards, The Power of Play (Kidsports), Total Quality Programming, Activity Areas, Equipment and Supplies Checklist, and NAEYC Code of Ethics, Air Force SAC Checklist) 5. Get handouts reproduced. 6. Assemble Handouts 7. Complete training handbook for new employees	An orientation training program emphasizing the developmental needs of children will be developed.	The author of the practicum proposal with assistance from program Director.	November 13-December 17 Weeks 3-7 Week 3 Week 3 Weeks 3-7 Weeks 5-7 Week 6 Week 6 Week 7

OBJECTIVE	*ACTION PLAN*	*OUTCOME*	*RESPONSIBILITY*	*TIME FRAME*
3. To implement training session for school-age staff and parents.	1. Discussion of workshop with program management.	Introduction of a developmentally appropriate program for school-age children.	The author of the proposal with assistance from program Director.	Weeks 1-8 (Oct. 30-Dec. 25)
	2. Discuss and confirm date, times, and place training session will be presented with program director.			Weeks 1 Week 2
	3. Develop a checklist of items needed for workshops.			Week 3
	4. Develop a budget for the training materials.			Week 3
	5. Develop a marketing plan for advertising the workshop.			Week 3 Week 4
	6. Advertise the workshop to staff and parents.			Week 4
	7. Confirm details (date, time, location, teaching objectives, target audience) with management staff.			Week 5
	8. Begin parent registrations for the workshop.			Week 6
	9. Request list of school-age care staff who will attend workshop.			Week 8
	10. Present orientation training program.			

OBJECTIVE	*ACTION PLAN*	*OUTCOME*	*RESPONSIBILITY*	*TIME FRAME*
4. To make recommendations for future training sessions based on the evaluation results of the training.	1. Set a deadline to return completed evaluations. 2. Develop a system to compare pre & post evaluations 3. Compile the results of the pre and post evaluations 4. Compare the results 5. Review results 6. Compile the results of the pre and post evaluations 7. Make recommendations for further training's needed or requested to youth programs management staff after review of available literature	To determine future training needs.	The author of the practicum, with assistance from the program director	Weeks 9 & 10 (Dec. 25-Jan 7) Week 9 Week 9 Week 9 Week 9 Week 9 Week 9 Week 10

APPENDIX B

Parent Feedback Survey & Results

Parent Feedback Survey

Dear Parents,

This questionnaire is designed to find out how we are meeting the needs of families in our program. Your candid and honest responses will enable us to improve communication and services for you and your child. It is not necessary to put your name on this form. Circle the numeral from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) that best represents your feelings regarding each of the statements below.

		strongly disagree				***strongly agree***
1.	I have received adequate information about program policies and procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	My child received a warm introduction into the program.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Teachers encourage me to be actively involved in my child's learning.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I am regularly informed about my child's development.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Classroom newsletters and teachers' written notes keep me well informed.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I have had sufficient opportunity for informal conversations with the teaching and administrative staff.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	My parent-teacher conferences have provided me with useful insights about my child.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I have been invited to participate in classroom activities and field trips.	1	2	3	4	5

How has your child benefitted from his/her experience at this center?

In what ways could we improve the program to better meet your child's needs?

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Parent Feedback Survey Results

Questions	No. of Respondents							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	5	5	5	4	4	2	3	3
2	4	5	3	5	4	4	5	3
3	1	3	3	4	3	2	3	5
4	1	3	4	3	3	2	4	2
5	1	4	4	4	4	4	3	2
6	3	5	3	4	5	4	3	3
7	1	3	3	3	3	2	5	2
8	1	4	2	2	3	2	1	2
Total	17	32	27	29	29	22	27	22

Score: Low of 8 to High of 40 (High score indicating positive perception)

Mean Score (Total/N0. of Respondent): 25.6

Parent Comments: combination of comments from beginning of practicum to end.

Positive benefits of program -
- Socialization skills
- Deals well with other children
- Self-sufficient

Improvement needed -
- Better homework area
- Increase supervision/oversite
- More structure
- Keep children with own age group
- Newsletters
- Add cubbies for all children
- Add monitoring system

Reference: Blueprint for Action, page 209

APPENDIX C

Professional Activities Questionnaire & Results

Professional Activities Questionnaire

1. Do you consider your work _____ "just a job" or _____ a career?

2. Did you enroll in any college courses for credit last year? no _____ yes _____

3. Are you currently working toward a degree or CDA credential? no _____ yes _____

4. On the average, how many hours per week do you spend over and above what you are paid for in activities related to early childhood? _____ hours

5. What professional organizations do you currently pay dues to?

   _____ _____

6. What professional journals and/or magazines do you currently subscribe to?

   _____ _____

7. How many professional books did you read last year?

   _____ none _____ 1 to 3 _____ 4 or more

8. How many advocacy letters to elected representatives or to the editor of your local newspaper have you written during the past year?

   _____ none _____ 1 _____ 2 or more

9. How many professional conferences/workshops did you attend last year?

   _____ none _____ 1 to 3 _____ 4 or more

10. How many workshops or lectures to professional groups did you give during the past year (not counting your own staff)?

    _____ none _____ 1 _____ 2 or more

11. Have you published any articles or books on early childhood education?

    Title/publisher_____

12. Do you expect to be working in the field of early childhood three years from now?

    _____ no _____ yes If no, why?_____

13. If you could do it all over again, would you choose a career in early childhood education?

    _____ no _____ yes Why? _____

From Jorde-Bloom, P. (1989a). *Measuring work attitudes: Technical manual for the Early Childhood Job Satisfaction Survey and the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey*. Brandon, VT: Psychology Press.

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Professional Activities Questionnaire Results

Questions	A Respondent	B Respondent
1	1	1
2	0	0
3	0	0
4	2	0
5	0	0
6	1	1
7	1	1
8	0	0
9	1	1
10	0	1
11	0	0
12	1	1
13	1	1
Total	8	7

Two respondents directly working with management of school-age program. Survey only accomplished one time.

Reference: Blueprint for Action, page 242

APPENDIX D

Role Perception Questionnaire & Results

Role Perception Questionnaire

Please circle the response that most nearly describes your feelings about your present job.

	seldom		*sometimes*		*always*
1. I am clear about what my responsibilities are.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am certain about how much authority I have.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am given a chance to do the things I do best.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have an opportunity to develop my own special abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I spend time on unnecessary, irrelevant tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Clear planned goals and objectives exist for my job.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I receive conflicting expectations from people about my job.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I have the knowledge and skills to do my job well.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have enough resources to do my job well.	1	2	3	4	5
10. There is enough time to do my job well.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I ignore certain policies in order to carry out my job.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I get the support I need to do my job well.	1	2	3	4	5

What keeps you from being as effective as you would like to be in your position?

If you had the power to change anything about your job, what would you change? Why would this be an improvement over existing conditions?

What suggestions do you have for improving schedules, routines, and procedures so staff can function as a more effective team?

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Role Perception Questionnaire Results

Respondent #	Table A Question 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10	Table B Question 5, 7, 11	Total
1	43	6	49
2	36	7	43
3	41	8	49
4	31	8	39
5	30	5	35
6	43	5	48
7	25	1	26
8	34	11	45
9	32	7	39
10	37	9	46
11	35	9	44
Total	387	76	463

Respondent Individual Score:

Range: Low of 26, High of 49

Average Role Clarity Score (Total/No. of Respondents): 42 (post-training session)
38 (pre-training session)

Low Score -- 12-24

High Score -- 48-60

A score of 44 indicates medium range of individual scores. staff perception of job is somewhat defined. Staff is fairly clear as to their own role within the organization.

Reference: Blueprint for Action, page 244

APPENDIX E

Staff Orientation Assessment & Results

Staff Orientation Assessment

Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below. Your honest, candid responses will help us continue to meet the needs of new staff in our center.

1. Were you made to feel comfortable and welcome at the center on your first day on the job? Did other staff know you were coming?

2. Were you given enough familiarity with the particulars of our school environment to help you through those first difficult days (parking, supplies, storage, lunch routines, schedules, etc.)?

3. Were you given sufficient background on the center's policies, goals, and philosophy?

4. Were you made to feel that others had a personal interest in your progress? Have staff made you feel like you are part of a team?

5. Are there any policies or procedures you would like to know more about?

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Staff Orientation Assessment RESULTS

Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below. Your honest, candid responses will help us continue to meet the needs of new staff in our center.

1. Were you made to feel comfortable and welcome at the center on your first day on the job? Did other staff know you were coming? Yes - 9, No - 2 81% yes

   Comments: management trainee made me feel very welcome on my first day of work. The staff knew I was coming. I received calls from staff prior to my arrival on island.

2. Were you given enough familiarity with the particulars of our school environment to help you through those first difficult days (parking, supplies, storage, lunch routines, schedules, etc.)?

   Yes - 6, No - 5 54.5% yes

   Comments: I think I could have had more thorough training, Thrust in my job and felt as if everyone else thought I should know where things were located.

3. Were you given sufficient background on the center's policies, goals, and philosophy?

   Yes - 4, No - 7 36% yes

   Comments: Not given sufficient background data until much later into the job, found out on my own, not until much later

4. Were you made to feel that others had a personal interest in your progress? Have staff made you feel like you are part of a team? Yes - 10, No - 1 91% yes

   Comments: From the flight chief down, Co-workers were supportive, part of a team, yes, very much from upper management, teamwork

5. Are there any policies or procedures you would like to know more about?

   Yes - 7, No 4 64% yes

   Comments: What should be done when nother in being done about a child problem? Interested in learning more about where to find things such as forms/completed forms/basic policies, better communication needed

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APPENDIX F

Approval Letter - Koralek, Colker & Dodge

National Association for the Education of Young Children
1509 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-1426

10 October 94

To Whom It May Concern

Request permission to use Chapter 1 of the book, "The What, Why, and How of High-Quality Early Childhood Education: A Guide for On-Site Supervision by Derry G. Koralek, Laura J. Colker, And Diane Trister Dodge, discussing quality care standards as a tool in the development of a practicum project in partial completion of a Master's Degree program in Child Care Administration from Nova Southeastern University, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Chapter 1 will be used in the development of an orientation training program for school-age staff and parents. Thank you ver much for your assistance.

Pat Payne
98-1716B Kaahumanu
Pearl City, HI 96782
Telephone & FAX: (808) 455-1946
Work: (808) 448-2042

APPENDIX G

Approval Letter - Paula Jorde Bloom

NEW HORIZONS
EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS AND LEARNING RESOURCES

P.O. BOX 363
LAKE FOREST ILLINOIS 60045

August 3, 1994

Ms. Pat Payne
98-1716B Kaahumanu
Pearl City, HI 96782

Dear Pat:

You have my permission to use any of the assessment tools from Blueprint for Action for your practicum project. On each page of any handouts you use from the book, please note the title, authors, and the phrase "reprinted with permission from the publisher."

Feel free to contact me at National-Louis University (1-800-443-5522) if you need any assistance in the design of your practicuum project or if you need any help interpreting the data generated from the assessment tools. Also, I would love a copy of your final project report when you are completed.

Best of luck in your studies and in all your work on behalf of young children.

Cordially,

Paula Jorde Bloom

Paula Jorde Bloom, Ph.D.

APPENDIX H

Publicity Materials

December 15, 1994

Dear Parents,

With the implementation and development of many new Air Force requirements for the school-age program, we are planning to offer a staff and parent orientation session at the Youth Center. This orientation session will be the beginning of a new training program for our school-age program staff. It will be held from 9:00 A. M. to 12:00 P. M. on Saturday, January 7, 1995. You are invited to attend to hear about the upcoming changes, view a training video on quality school-age child care programs, and learn about developmentally appropriate practices for school-age children. Your comments and suggestions about the training session and upcoming changes are encouraged. Of course, refreshments will be served.

Please show your interest in attending by signing up at the Youth Center by January 5th. For further information, call Julie Klembara at 449-1492.

Pat Payne
Youth Programs Flight

PARENT & STAFF TRAINING SESSION

JANUARY 7, 1995

AGENDA

9:00 A.M.: WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

9:15 A.M.: DISCUSSION OF SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

9:30 A.M.: VIDEO ON QUALITY SCHOOL-AGE CARE PROGRAMS

10:00 A.M.: REVIEW OF HANDOUTS
- DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES
- QUALITY CARE STANDARDS
- CODE OF ETHICS FOR STAFF
- ENVIRONMENTS
- EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

10:30 A.M.: BREAK

10:45 A.M.: PRESENTATION FROM SAC STAFF

11:00 A.M.: HOW ARE WE GOING TO IMPLEMENT CHANGES?
- SAC MODULES
- ASSISTANCE FROM TRAINING & CURRICULUM SPECIALISTS
- ASSESSING SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE QUALITY
- USAF CHECKLIST
- CERTIFICATION INSPECTIONS

11:45 A.M.: QUESTIONS FOR PANEL (CASEY POWERS, JULIE KLEMBARA, PAT PAYNE)

APPENDIX I

Staff Orientation Training Handouts

A

STAFF ORIENTATION TRAINING PROGRAM

YOUTH PROGRAMS FLIGHT TRAINING PROGRAM

1 KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

Provide safe indoor and outdoor environments
Respond to emergencies
Help children develop safe habits

2 PROMOTING GOOD HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Provide healthy indoor and outdoor environments
Show children things to do every day to keep themselves healthy
Follow instructions for reporting child abuse and neglect

3 CREATING AND USING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING

Organize indoor and outdoor areas that encourage play and exploration
Select and arrange appropriate materials and equipment that foster growth and learning
Plan and implement a schedule and routines appropriate to the ages of the children

4 PROMOTING PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Reinforce and encourage physical development
Provide equipment and activities for gross motor development
Provide equipment and activities for fine motor development

5 PROMOTING COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provide opportunities for children to use all their senses to explore the world
Interact with Children in ways that help them develop confidence in their ability to think
Provide opportunities for children to develop new concepts and skills appropriate to their age and stage of development

6 PROMOTING COMMUNICATION

Interact with children in ways that encourage them to communicate their thoughts and feelings
Provide materials and activities that promote communication skills
Help children develop listening and speaking skills

7 PROMOTING CREATIVITY

Arrange the learning environment to support children's creative development
Provide a variety of activities and experiences to promote creative development
Interact with and respond to children in way that encourage creative expression

8 BUILDING CHILDREN'S SELF-ESTEEM

Develop a positive and supportive relationship with each child
Help children to accept and appreciate themselves and others
Provide children with opportunities to feel successful and competent

9 PROMOTING SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Help children learn to get along with other members of the group
Help children understand and express their feelings and respect those of others
Provide an environment and experiences that help children develop social skills

10 PROVIDING POSITIVE GUIDANCE

Provide an environment that encourages children's self-discipline
Use positive methods to guide individual children
Help children understand and express their feelings in acceptable ways

11 WORKING WITH FAMILIES

Communicate with family members often to exchange information about their child at home and at the center
Provide a variety of ways for family members to participate in their child's life at the center
Help family members learn about child development and how to respond to their child's behaviors

12 BEING AN EFFECTIVE MANAGER

Observe and record information about each child's growth and development
Work as a member of a team to plan an individualized program
Follow administrative policies, practices, and procedures

13 MAINTAINING A COMMITMENT TO PROFESSIONALISM

Continually assess your own performance
Continue to learn about caring for children
Apply professional ethics at all times

STANDARDS OF QUALITY

1. The program is based on an understanding of child development.

2. The program is individualized to meet the needs of every child

3. The physical environment is safe and orderly, and it contains varied and stimulating toys and materials.

4. Children may select activities and materials that interest them, and they learn by being actively involved.

5. Adults show respect for children's needs and ideas and talk with them in caring ways.

6. Parents feel respected and are encouraged to participate in the program.

7. Staff members have specialized training in early childhood development and education.

Koralek, D. G., Colker, L. J., and Trister Dodge, D. (1993). The what, why, and how of high-quality early childhood education: A guide for on-site supervision (pp. 1-10). Washington, D. C., National Association for the Education of Young Children.

PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE IN SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

Developmentally appropriate school-age child care programs are tailored to the developmental characteristics and needs of the children and youth they serve. Programs are mindful that children and youth change greatly during the school-age years and that the rate and nature of change vary considerable, both among children and youth and across developmental areas within the same child or youth. Programs approach these developmental realities as opportunities, rather than as problems.

Age appropriateness refers to a program's congruence with the "universal, predictable sequences of growth and change that occur in children.

Individual appropriateness denotes responsiveness to each child's unique pattern and timing of growth.

Albrecht, Kay M. and Plantz, Margaret C. (1993). Developmentally appropriate practice in school-age child care programs, (2nd ed). Virginia: Project Home Safe.

THE POWER OF PLAY

POINTS TO REMEMBER

If a child is denied the opportunity to play and have fun, he is most likely to resort to misbehavior or withdrawal.

A child's major source of communication is manifested through play. Children enhance their physical, mental, social and emotional growth through various types of play.

Play provides social interaction with others.

Play ultimately helps shape the child's emotional and psychological development.

For a school-age child, play can be used to teach basic eye/hand coordination as well as develop fine and gross motor skills. It is important not to make play too competitive. Always acknowledge the child for their attempts to accomplish rather than just the accomplishments.

Always encourage a child through positive reinforcement. This will encourage participation. Through fun games and activities that are non-threatening, children with behavior problems will start to enjoy going to school, socially interacting with others, communicating with others and ultimately learning.

Stress, pressure, anxiety, fear, anger and uncertainty are everyday experiences for today's children. Without play, they have no outlet to reduce or eliminate their feelings. Healthy activities which help children to release their strong emotions include racquetball, tennis, golf, bowling, basketball, running, card games, table games, darts, nintendo or many other activities that replace stress and anxiety with another form of mental and physical entertainment.

Play is also an expression of one's feelings.

"Families that play together - stay together." Incorporate family activities in the school-age program.

Seibert, G. (1992, May). The power of play. Paper presented at the PACAF Youth Directors' Conference, Anderson AFB, Guam.

Components of a Curriculum

A developmentally appropriate program is one that is planned and carried out based on a knowledge of how children grow and what they can do -- socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically - at each stage of development. Age appropriate activities take into consideration the normal sequences of growth typical of children within given age groups.

--A statement of philosophy - description of educational theories and child-development principles underlying the curriculum's approach to early childhood education. An appropriate curriculum for child-development programs is based on an understanding of how young children learn and how they develop socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically.

--A statement of goals and objects which clearly defines realistic goals and objectives that cover all areas of development and that outline what children can be expected to achieve while in the program. These goals and objectives are used to plan activities and experiences with a specific purpose in mind and to assess each child's progress.

--Guidance on creating the physical environment --specific guidance on how to arrange indoor and outdoor space to support children's growth and development.

-- An educational approach -a clear explanation of how to plan and implement the curriculum

--Suggestions for developmentally appropriate activities--suggested activities that can be used in planning for and responding to the interests and needs of children.

--A meaningful role for parents - recognition that parents are their children's first and primary teachers. A developmentally appropriate program curriculum, therefore, includes guidance on ensuring a meaningful role for parents in the daily program and offers suggestions for sharing the curriculum with parents. (Koralek, 1993)

Koralek, D. G., Colker, L. J., and Trister Dodge, D. (1993). The what, why, and how of high-quality early childhood education: A guide for on-site supervision (pp. 1-10). Washington, D. C., National Association for the Education of Young Children.